# McNEESE STATE UNIVERSITY

# Freshman Advising

#5 Plan cycle - 5
Plan cycle 2019/2020
7/1/19 - 6/30/20

# Introduction

The mission of the Office of Freshman Advising is to provide sound academic advice based on student needs and interests and general knowledge about University policies and procedures to transfer non-traditional and traditional students in a nurturing environment. This is accomplished through Freshman Orientation, the Blue and Gold Peerleader program, committee service, testing opportunities, and the development of new retention strategies such as early intervention with at-risk students.

The Office of Freshman Advising is responsible for academic advising of all first-time freshmen; communicating University policies and procedures to students and directing them to University services relevant to their needs; leading group advising of special populations; coordinating and leading Freshman Orientation, Non-Traditional and Transfer Student Orientation; counseling students on academic plans; coordination and administration of all standardized testing, input of test scores in Banner, recommending tests appropriate to a student's goals and ability; coordination and administration of the ACT exam for junior high and high schools students in the community, some of who later attend McNeese; serving on committees that directly impact student success.

Academic advising and facilitating certain processes (course withdrawal, resignation from the University, etc.) may be done via e-mail or fax communication.

**Performance Objective 1** **To use orientation activities as a tool to engage and retain students by providing them with access to faculty and students from their selected college, introduce them to campus organizations and involved student leaders, and familiarize them with Moodle and the MyMcNeese portal as well as other basic information on how to be a successful college student.**

### 1 Assessment and Benchmark

Benchmark:
- On average, the answer to "Were the Peerleaders helpful and available to answer your questions?" will be >4.74 (orientation 2013 combined data).
- On average, the answer to "I feel the information in my Q & A session with my Peer Leaders was informative and helpful" will be >4.5.
- On average, the answer to "I now understand how to look up my classes and register for them on-line" will be >4.5.

The benchmark 'On average, the answer to "Do you feel that the information from your breakout session will help you be successful in your major?" will be >4.41' was eliminated from the survey for 2017.

### 1.1 Data

| Academic Year | # of Surveys Completed |
|---|---|
| 2013-2014 | 1,349 |
| 2014-2015 | 1,256 |
| 2015-2016 | 1,239 |
| 2016-2017 | 1,190 |
| 2017-2018 | 1,330 |
| 2018-2019 | 1,357 |
| 2019-2020 | 1,122 |

| Item | Academic Year Ending | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
| "Were the Peerleaders helpful and available to answer your questions?" | 4.78 | 4.86 | 4.77 | 4.88 | 4.86 |
| "Do you feel that the information from your breakout session will help you be successful in your major?" | 4.52 | 4.55 | 4.44 | – | – |
| "I feel that the information in my Q & A session with my Peer Leaders was informative and helpful." | – | – | – | 4.75 | 4.73 |
| "I now understand how to look up my classes and register them online." | – | – | 4.56 | – | 4.61 |

| Item | Academic Year Ending | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| "Were the Peerleaders helpful and available to answer your questions?" | 4.85 | 4.84 | | | |
| "I feel that the information in my Q & A session with my Peer Leaders was informative and helpful." | 4.73 | 4.72 | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| "I now understand how to look up my classes and register them online." | 4.68 | 4.66 | | | |

2019_Orientation_Surveys_Combined   [PDF  153 KB  7/15/20]

### 1.1.1  Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2017-2018:
Benchmark Achieved?
- Yes, benchmarks were met or exceeded on the three survey areas we retained. New benchmarks were set for the three new survey areas.
- Note: For this year, we removed two questions from the previous survey and added new ones to help determine if 1) our Peerleader led Q & A session that replaced the departmental breakout is successful, and 2) now that we are doing advising and registration at Orientation, determine if the students left there understanding how to look up classes and register them.

Revise
- Freshman orientation. The departmental led breakout was removed from orientation last year after reading the students comments from the last few years and after talking with our Peerleaders. We felt that the Peerleaders could present that basic material and "shoot straight" with the students from a student perspective about their department and also cover some other things in a more timely Q & A session. This also freed up more time for Dr. Chris Thomas to address some of the required topic items such as sexual harassment, hazing, and binge drinking with the students. University Services has assumed responsibility for planning and implementation of Parent Round-Up last year but this year we are having one of our advisors go and speak to parents about what their child will be doing at Orientation that day. Also, "ice-breakers" were added last year at the request of the students from previous year's surveys saying that the students wished they had more interaction with the other students. These seem to really make the students relax and open up more when it comes to the Q & A session.
- Registration procedure for Orientation. We were able to move from Registerblast to our new CRM system (Hobsons Radius) which should allow us to reduce errors, facilitate reporting, and track students from their first point-of-contact with the University, through orientation, and throughout their degree.
- An online orientation is being developed (company under contract, video has been recorded, and are expecting production to be completed by the fall) and we plan to pilot it in spring 2019. This will be a complete orientation for the online learners and a supplement to our traditional and non-traditional/transfer orientation program to better inform students about the university and the services we have for them to take advantage of.

2018-2019:
- Benchmarks were met.
- This year the students are being required to view the on-line Orientation prior to attending Freshman Orientation so that they will have exposure to much of the information we will provide them as well as cover areas that we do not have time to cover in Freshman Orientation.
- The other procedures noted in 2017-2018 are still being done successfully.
- For 2020-2021, Freshman Orientation will be combined with Cowboy Camp to provide a new two-day Orientation experience. Meetings between the two leaders are taking place and details being ironed out. This should make our FTF even more comfortable with the University prior to the first day of class and enhance retention.

2019-2020:
- Benchmarks were met.
- The on-line Orientation is being competed by all students (on-line majors only have to complete this while other students complete this as well as Cowboy Camp/Orin).

- For 2020-2021, Cowboy Camp/Orientation was established but due to the COVID19 pandemic, we were unable to bring the students on to campus for these 2-day events. We will hopefully kick these off in summer 2021.
- For summer 2020, the Peerleaders began putting on "Cowboy Corrales" via Zoom as mentioned in another section to give students more information on typical college matters as well as sessions directly related to their academic college (Deans and Dept Heads joined in). These seem to be well received by the students that are attending them but we need to better promote them and properly assess them in years to come.

## 2 Assessment and Benchmark

Benchmarks:
- For Non-Traditional/Transfer Orientation, on average, the answer to "Did the information /content presented by the Peerleaders answer all your questions about McNeese State University?" will be >4.51.
  - Prior to 2020, the question was "Was the information /lectures presented in a fashion that answered all your questions about McNeese?"
  - Prior to 2017, the question was "Was the information/lectures presented in a fashion that made it easy for you to understand?"
- For Non-traditional/Transfer Orientation, on average, the answer to "After attending the Non-traditional /Transfer Orientation, I feel prepared to start college" will be >4.5.
  - Prior to 2020, the question was "Do you feel that attending Orientation was effective in acclimating you to McNeese?"

The benchmark "For Non-Traditional/Transfer Student orientation, the average score for the response to 'Transfer Student orientation answered all my questions' will be >4.5" was eliminated from the survey for 2017.

### 2.1 Data

| Academic Year | # of Surveys Completed |
|---------------|------------------------|
| 2013-2014 | 69 |
| 2014-2015 | 34 |
| 2015-2016 | 163 |
| 2016-2017 | 63 |
| 2017-2018 | 47 |
| 2018-2019 | 20 |
| 2019-2020 | 74 |

| Item | Academic Year Ending | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
| "Was the information/lectures presented in a fashion that made it easy for you to understand?" | 4.56 | 4.54 | – | 4.7 | 4.62 |
| "Transfer Student Orientation answered all my questions." | 4.61 | 4.53 | – | 4.63 | – |
| "Do you feel that attending Orientation was effective in acclimating you to McNeese?" | – | – | 4.73 | – | 4.73 |

| Item | Academic Year Ending | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| "Was the information/lectures presented in a fashion that made it easy for you to understand?" | 4.74 | – | – | – | – |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| "Do you feel that attending Orientation was effective in acclimating you to McNeese?" | 4.62 | – | – | – | – |
| "Did the information/content presented by the Peerleaders answer all your questions about McNeese State University?" | – | 4.73 | | | |
| "After attending the Non-Traditional/Transfer Orientation, I feel prepared to start college." | – | 4.66 | | | |

Non-Traditional_Student_Orientation_Survey_19-20  [PDF  58 KB  7/15/20]

### 2.1.1  Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2017-2018:
Benchmark Achieved?
- Yes, benchmarks were met or exceeded on the two survey areas we retained. New benchmarks were set for the new survey areas.
- Note: For this year, we added a new question to determine whether students who attend Non-Traditional/Transfer Orientation feel adequately acclimated to attend McNeese (since it is very much abbreviated and does not contain a physical campus tour).

Revise
- Registration procedure for Orientation. We were able to move from Registerblast to our new CRM system (Hobsons Radius) which should allow us to reduce errors, facilitate reporting, and track students from their first point-of-contact with the University, through orientation, and throughout their degree.
- An online orientation is being developed (company under contract, video has been recorded, and are expecting production to be completed by the fall) and we plan to pilot it in spring 2019. This will be a complete orientation for the online learners and a supplement to our traditional and non-traditional/transfer orientation program to better inform students about the university and the services we have for them to take advantage of.

2018-2019:
- Benchmarks were met.
- This year we have revamped our non-traditional/transfer Orientation to have it completely led and presented by our Peerleaders. We believe that the information presented from their peers would come across as more relatable. We continue to have guest from other areas of campus presenting as well. Actual campus tours are also being offered for anyone wanting to take one since the virtual tour was not doing a good job of acclimating our students to the physical campus. The new on-line Orientation is also being required prior to attending non-traditional/transfer Orientation.

2019-2020:
- Benchmarks were met.
- The new format of information presented by the Peerleaders along with other campus representatives seems to work very well. Students completing the on-line Orientation prior to attending has seemed to answer many of the questions we were previously getting.
- Due to the COVID19 pandemic, the Non-Traditional/Transfer orientations are not taking place in summer 2020 but students continue to complete the on-line Orientation and the Peerleaders will hold a virtual "Zoom" Q&A session for the Non-Traditional/Transfer students prior to fall semester starting.

## Performance Objective 2  To collaborate with other departments in a way that directly impacts the success of students.

### 1  Assessment and Benchmark

Benchmark: All advisors will serve on committees or panels that directly impact students at risk.

**1.1 Data**

2017-2018:
- Each advisor and the director serves on at least one permanent committee. Four out of six are involved in committees that work directly with students at risk – Grade Appeals, Academic Integrity and Financial Aid appeals, Academic Appeals, Student Advocacy, and Care Mentoring.
- University Services is implementing a program of required participation for first-time students to try to get them more involved on campus. They have set up events during the first two weeks of the semester and we are adding the requirement to our Freshman Orientation that each student must attend a certain number of events in addition to attending Orientation in order to receive their Orientation credit. We will begin this in the fall 2018 semester and University Services will track its effectiveness.

2018-2019:
- While all advisors are not on standing committees that impact students at risk, all are on RNL retention strategy teams that directly designed to impact students at risk. Once the RNL work is completed, we plan to have every advisor assigned to a standing committee that impacts students at risk or working in the care mentoring program.
- This is our first year of requiring students to participate in the "Engage" events. We will have to track this for several years to determine its true impact.

2019-2020:
- Since assignment to University committees is not done by us, we are unable to assure that all advisors are on standing committees. All of our advisors serve as mentors to students (formally or informally) and work with students either through sorority alumni events, campus ministry, or athletics outside of work hours.

**1.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement**

2017-2018:
- The benchmark was not met.
- Advisor workload makes intensive committee work problematic. However, we are actively seeking to serve on committees where student success is an issue. Though the expected level was not met, we did increase our involvement in these programs so I would like to keep the benchmark there and hope to appoint the other two advisors in areas of service that directly impact "at risk" students.
- Adding new requirements to attend special events the first two weeks of school is a new initiative to try to get students more involved on campus. This initiative begins fall 2018 so no current data is available.

2018-2019:
A formal request will be made to the VP of Academic Affairs and the VP of Student Affairs for all of our advisors to be placed on standing committees that directly impact students for 2020-2021.
- The benchmark is technically not met.
- The Engage events were required for FTF this past year. Most students did attend the events, though there were some who received "I" grades for fall and attended their events in the spring as well as some students who received "U" grades at the end of the spring. These events are being better publicized this year to try to ensure that all FTF attend the events and get engaged on campus.
- All advisors are on RNL Rention Strategy teams (these are not permanent committee assignments but will take up much of the upcoming year) which are designed to directly impact student success. Teams are meeting now and the steering committee will determine which efforts the University will undertake by the end of the summer. Alexis is serving on "Online One-Stop", Sherronda is serving on "Sophomore Transition", Karen and I are serving on "Academic Advising - Centralized Center", and Lydia is serving on "Early Alert". The advisors also continue to serve on various student-related committees throughout the year.

2019-2020:

**Performance Objective 3** **To assist the University efforts to retain freshman through effective advising, intervention strategies, and programming.**

### 1 Assessment and Benchmark

Benchmark: Increase the retention rate of first-time freshman cohort from entering fall to following fall by 0.9%.

#### 1.1 Data

| Reporting Year | Retention Rate | % change |
|---|---|---|
| Fall 2013-Fall 2014 | 70.0% | – |
| Fall 2014-Fall 2015 | 66.5% | -3.5% |
| Fall 2015-Fall 2016 | 66.1% | -0.4% |
| Fall 2016-Fall 2017 | 68.1% | +2.0% |
| Fall 2017-Fall 2018 | 70.08% | +2.9% |
| Fall 2018-Fall 2019 | 69.52% | -0.56% |

2019 FTF Retention Rates   [XLSX  149 KB  7/15/20]

#### 1.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2017-2018:
- The benchmark was met and continuous improvement in the retention rate is critical to our success as advisors.
- Advising at-risk students. The Board of Regents has developed a co-requisite program for students who have just barely missed admission into the first level of math or English. Students enrolled in these courses should be prepared to meet with their advisor and/or instructor whenever concerns arise over attendance or class performance. We are seeing great success with students in these programs and will continue to offer them.
- The University is joining several other schools in the UL System to promote "Think 30," also called "15 to Finish," to encourage students to complete 30 credits each year in order to graduate in four years. A team is planning the marketing of this venture and we currently show a video and have our Peerleaders talk to the students at orientation about this.
- The new QEP for the University incorporates effective advising as a supporting element to its primary goal. We sent two advisors to the NACADA conference this year and plan to send the other two advisors next year to give them access to this unique professional development opportunity.
- The University Faculty Advising Committee has been reenacted and one of our advisors is chairing the committee. This year they put on an Advising Workshop and special make-up workshop for the Engineering/Computer Science department who was unable to attend the campus wide one and had over 100 advisors from across the campus in attendance. All of the advisors in General and Basic Studies participated in leading roundtable discussions. Next year we will either offer this to all advisors again or hold one for all new advisors on campus.
- The CARE Mentorship program has been developed through the University Services department. This program targets minority and at-risk students but is open to anyone who might benefit from being assigned a mentor. We will utilize this system as a resource when advising students on academic plans as well as others we feel might benefit from such an opportunity.
- We have tied into the existing system the Registrar has for the faculty notification of non-attendance, and advisors will reach out to students right after the 14th class day to determine the reason for their non-attendance and see if we can offer assistance or refer them to the CARE program, tutoring, Writing Center, etc. or explain how to minimize consequences and possibly drop the class if that is deemed necessary. We believe this early alert will assist in the University's retention efforts.

- An online orientation is being developed (company under contract, video has been recorded, and are expecting production to be complete by the fall) and we plan to pilot it in spring 2019. This will be a complete orientation for our online learners and a supplement to our traditional and non-traditional/transfer orientations. We believe this will greatly enhance our orientation program to better inform students about the University and the services we have for them to take advantage of.

2018-2019:
- The benchmark was met and exceeded (highest rate since we began tracking them in 2013).
- All of the 2017-2018 noted processes are still in place and working well.
- For Fall 2019, we added 36 small group advising sessions, prior to Orientation, where FTF could be advised and register their classes. 208 students took advantage of this opportunity. If we offer this next year, we will offer less sessions since many sessions only had 2-3 students.
- Our online Orientation, which all FTF are required to view prior to coming to Orientation, is in place and working well for fall 2019. Our online-only students are now using this to meet their Freshman Orientation requirement. These students are not being charged the Orientation fee this year but the plan is to change the fee structure and charge them for using this next year.
- With the RNL SEP, more processes will be implemented including a revamping of our early alert system for 2019 or 2020 and this should further increase retention. For 2020-2021, we will be combining Cowboy Camp and Orientation which should also positively impact our retention.

2019-2020:
- The benchmark was not met (-0.56%) this year.
- It has been an exceptionally tough year with enrollment suffering an overall decrease. Some factors include the area's economy being one of the best in the nation along with Sowela having a lot of money pumped in to support their 2 yr programs.
- As previously noted, Freshman Advising had moved to offering small group advising prior to Orientation with only minimal success. This year efforts were being made to better promote the sessions and to include more Peerleader involvement but due to the COVID19 pandemic, these sessions had to be turned into virtual "Zoom" advising sessions. These sessions have been extremely well attended but time will tell how effective they were. The plan moving forward it to go back to small group (on-campus) advising for those who can attend and offer Zoom advising to those who live out-of-sate.
- In Fall 2019 we utilized RNL's CSI (College Student Inventory) for the 148 students enrolled in our pilot MATH 110/113 sections. The students did not respond well when asked to come in to see their advisor to get their results and after looking at the information obtained and the cost, it was decided that we not continue using the CSI but we will continue to track persistance and graduation on this cohort.
- Cowboy Camp/Orientation was on track to be expanded to a 2-day event during the summer of 2020 but due to the COVID19 pandemic, we were unable to have it. We will kick it off for summer 2021.

## 2  Assessment and Benchmark

Benchmark: On the Freshman Orientation survey, earn an average score of 4.49 out of 5 on the survey item that reads: "Do you feel the information from the Q & A session with your Peerleader was informative and helpful?"

Prior to 2016-2017, the benchmark was an average score of 4.49 out of 5 on the survey item that read: "Do you feel that the information from your breakout session will help you be successful in your major?". As mentioned earlier, the breakout session with academic departments was replaced with the same information shared in a Q & A led by Peerleaders.

### 2.1  Data

| Academic Year | # of Surveys Completed | Average Score |
|---|---|---|
| 2013-2014 | 1,349 | 4.52 |

| 2014-2015 | 1,256 | 4.55 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2015-2016 | 1,239 | 4.44 |
| 2016-2017 | 1,190 | 4.75 |
| 2017-2018 | 1,350 | 4.73 |
| 2018-2019 | 1,357 | 4.73 |
| 2019-2020 | 1,124 | 4.72 |

2019_Orientation_Surveys_Combined   [PDF  153 KB  7/15/20]

### 2.1.1  Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2017-2018:
The benchmark was met. Since this is the first year to obtain data on this survey question, we were pleasantly surprised that students rated it so high. We felt like having this information come directly peer-to-peer that the students might take it and apply it better than if it came from a faculty member. We will track this data for a few years and may need to adjust the benchmark up a bit.

2018-2019:
The benchmark was met. This is the second year where the Peerleaders have presented at the Q & A session during Orientation and the students really seem to like talking peer to peer and being able to ask questions without any faculty/staff around. This year we added more time to this segment.

2019-2020:
We continue to have Peerleaders deliver the content in Orientation and the Q&A sessions have the most participation by Peerleaders and students attending. For the summer of 2020, we began having Peerleaders put on "Cowboy Corrals" which were Zoom presentations put on by the Peerleaders on common topics like paying fees, buying books, what's college like, etc. along with sessions by academic college in which the Deans and Dept Heads joined in. These sessions offered student information as well as Q&A time.